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## *House of Representatives*

### Statement of Congressman Ron Kind H.J.Res.114, Authorizing the Use of Force Against Iraq October 9, 2002

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

We have before us today one of the most important issues that a democracy must decide, whether to potentially go to war against another nation. It is a vote of conscience, and I believe reasonable people can disagree while looking at the same set of facts.

September 11, however, has changed the psyche of our nation forever. We witnessed in horror what a few suicidal terrorists can accomplish in a low-tech operation, and now we shudder to imagine what suicidal terrorists can accomplish if they gain access to high-tech weapons of mass destruction.

I believe Saddam Hussein has biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction and that he is aggressively seeking to develop nuclear capability. But I also believe that he can be deterred because, as New York Times columnist

Thomas Friedman puts it, Saddam loves his life more than he hates us.

It is, however, irrefutable that Saddam is in blatant violation of numerous UN resolutions that call for his disarmament of these weapons. Now the question becomes: How do we enforce these resolutions and accomplish the universal goal of disarming his weapons of mass destruction?

I have come to the conclusion that my two sons' futures and the future of all our children across the globe will be made a little safer if Saddam disarms, on his own or with our help, militarily, if necessary. I pray that it is done peacefully. I pray that he blinks.

But I have also concluded that we are dealing with a person who will not do the right thing unless, literally, he has a gun pointing at his head. Therefore, I support the resolution before us today.

But I also support the Spratt amendment, because how we accomplish our goals and with whom can make all the difference. We need to do this with the help and the support of the international community. I believe that it would be disastrous if we try to accomplish disarmament through unilateral military action.

The process we take will determine whether the rest of the world views us as a beacon or as a bully. We could remain a beacon of hope and optimism as the leader of the free world, promoting economic progress for all, respecting human rights, and ensuring democratic values such as freedom, political pluralism, religious tolerance, free speech, and respect for the rule of law; or we could be viewed as the superpower bully, imposing our military power whenever we want and wherever we want.

I give the President the benefit of the doubt when he now says that the use of

military force will be a last resort, not a first option; that regime change can also mean attitude change of Saddam's; and that we will work hard to gather international support for disarming him before military action is taken.

That is what the administration should have been saying from day one, and it is now reflected in the new resolution before us today.

We need to do this the right way because UN engagement and international support is essential. I subscribe to the "crystal store" theory of U.S. foreign policy: If you break it, you own it. If we break Iraq, we will have the responsibility to rebuild it, just as we need to rebuild Afghanistan today. This is another vital reason why international support is critical for our action in Iraq, for what happens the day after.

We have never been good at nation building. We can accomplish military goals with little help, but our democracy does not have the experience or the sustainability for successful nation building. Therefore, we must approach the aftermath of any conflict in the region with the greatest degree of humility.

In addition, I am concerned that the administration is developing a blind spot. They are becoming overly intoxicated with the use of

our military power. I am glad that we have the world's most powerful military, but this is not just a battle of military might; it is also a battle of values and ideas in the region. Our message to the outside world needs to be better than: You are either for us or you are against us; and if you are against us, we are going to kill you.

Instead, we need to send a message through words and deeds that we are interested in being good global citizens as well. Unfortunately, the unilateralist message this administration has sent from day one has now come back to haunt us in our attempt to secure support against Iraq:

No to the global climate treaty,  
No to the biological treaty,  
No to the land mines treaty,  
No to the ABM treaty,  
No to an international crimes tribunal.  
If the rest of the world does not like it, that is just tough.

Instead, the world needs to hear from us that we are concerned about our global environment; we are concerned about their economic progress; we are concerned that 2 billion people must survive on just \$1 a day; that 1.5 billion people, most of them children, cannot even get a clean glass of water; and that we want to help eradicate the scourge of AIDS.

Furthermore, the world needs to hear that we are truly interested in being honest brokers in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East. We need to recognize that the real battleground for peace throughout the world ultimately lies in education.

We cannot just keep looking at the Arab world as a great gas station, indifferent to what happens inside their countries, because the gas now is leaking, and there are people starting to throw matches around. If we have learned anything from September 11, it is that if we do not visit and help in a bad neighborhood, that bad neighborhood can come and visit us.

So for the sake of our young military troops, for the sake of the Iraqi people, and for the sake of our nation as it is perceived by the rest of the world in the 21st century, I pray that we can accomplish Saddam's disarmament peacefully and, if not, then with international support.

But today we need to give the President this tool in his diplomatic arsenal, and also pray that he uses it wisely.

May God continue to bless these United States of America.